

Message Text

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TO USDEL SECRETARY PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 231139 TOSEC 270306

LIMDIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT ROME 15215 ACTION SECSTATE INFO LONDON DTD 17 SEP 76

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QTE: C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 15215

LIMDIS

FROM AMBASSADOR LODGE'S OFFICE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, VT, RH
SUBJECT: VATICAN'S APPEAL RE CASE OF RHODESIAN BISHOP

1. VATICAN'S ACTING FOR MIN SILVESTRINI HAS REQUESTED US TO TRANSMIT URGENTLY FOLLOWING APPEAL TO THE SECRETARY.
2. POPE PAUL IS VERY PREOCCUPIED WITH UPCOMING TRIAL IN RHODESIA OF BISHOP DONAL RAYMOND LAMONT, WHO IS ACCUSED OF ASSISTING ENEMIES OF STATE. VATICAN FEARS THAT TRIAL WHICH BEGINS AROUND SEPTEMBER 21 WOULD, ON BASIS OF WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT RHODESIAN JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS, LEAD TO CONVICTION OF BISHOP AND THAT SUCH SENTENCE WOULD HAVE INTERNATIONAL REPERCUSSIONS. SILVESTRINI SAID THAT VATICAN ADVICE HAS UP TO NOW FORESTALLED PUBLIC PROTESTS BY SEVERAL NATIONAL EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES. IN EVENT OF BISHOP'S CONVICTION SUCH PROTESTS
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WOULD BE INEVITABLE AND VATICAN WOULD ITSELF BE COMPELLED TO

DENOUNCE RHODESIA.

3. IN ORDER AVOID SUCH CONFRONTATION SILVESTRINI INFORMED US THAT VATICAN HAD ALREADY APPEALED TO GREAT BRITAIN (THROUGH BRITISH LEGATION TO HOLY SEE) TO INTERCEDE WITH RHODESIAN GOVERNMENT AND HAVE IT ABANDON TRIAL. HE THEN EXPRESSED HOPE THAT USG WOULD ALSO DO WHATEVER IT COULD IN PURSUIT OF SAME OBJECTIVE.

4. COMMENT: VATICAN OBVIOUSLY HOPES THAT THE SECRETARY DURING HIS CURRENT DIPLOMATIC EFFORT WILL SEEK OPPORTUNITY TO DEFUSE CASE. BRITISH MINISTER INFORMED US PRIOR TO OUR MEETING WITH SILVESTRINI THAT VATICAN HAD APPROACHED HIM ON SUBJECT AND THAT HE HAD CONVEYED MESSAGE TO FOREIGN OFFICE. BEAUDRY UNQTE: ROBINSON

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